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ABSTRACT

These four quarterly newsletter issues address various topics of interest to teachers of young children. Each issue focuses on a theme and includes an article on that theme, along with regular columns. The Fall 1997 issue focuses on kindergartners as inquirers and on using a negotiated curriculum in the early childhood setting. The vice president's column for this issue discusses father-daughter relationships. The topic of the Winter 1997 issue is "Creating a True Multicultural Setting." A sidebar explores coping with speech difficulties, while the vice president's column addresses redefining roles and expectations in teacher-student relationships. The Spring 1998 newsletter focuses on today's playground, discussing the new call for an end to traditional playgrounds in favor of ones designed to support children's development and play. A sidebar describes Georgia's voluntary prekindergarten program, and the vice president's column addresses listening to and supporting children's teachers. The Summer 1998 issue focuses on helping the overly aggressive child to develop prosocial behavior. Sidebars discuss the health hazards of environmental smoke, guidelines for well-behaved children, and tips for a fun and safe summer. The vice president's column discusses preservice, novice, experienced, and seasoned teachers learning together. All issues contain listings of new Web resources, and most describe print or video releases. (EV)

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ages 4-6

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1998 Bridge To Understanding Award

The Bridge to Understanding Award, sponsored by the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY), is seeking applicants for the 1998 award. This award recognizes programs that promote reading as a way to expand a child's world. The winner will receive $500.

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Applications are available by contacting USBBY Secretariat, 800 Barksdale Road, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139; 302-731-1600, ext. 229. Deadline for submissions is December 1, 1997.

Kindergartners As Inquirers: Negotiated Curriculum in the Early Childhood Setting

Dan Wuori, Kindergarten Teacher
Lonnie B. Nelson Elementary School,
Columbia, SC

Young children possess a seemingly inexhaustible sense of wonder. They constantly inquire about the world around them, as part of an ongoing cycle of "meaning making." It is little wonder, then, that early childhood educators often find themselves drowned in a sea of "whys" and "what ifs." Kindergartners are truly the world's most curious lot.

Therefore, it is startling to note that American kindergarten classrooms have grown increasingly *less responsive* to the questions and interests of these young learners. Force-fed a diet of contrived activities and ditto sheets, children soon learn that school revolves around the questions of grown-ups, not their own. Their natural tendencies quashed, "learning" is soon reduced to a list of facts to be memorized, while teachers adhere to curricular mandates and publisher-conceived theme units.

In light of this disparity between "natural" and "classroom" learning, many educators are bucking the trend toward teacher-conceived units and instead building curriculum from their students' questions. This responsive approach, inspired in part by the emergent curriculum that fuels the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993), infuses students with a joy for learning uncommon in U.S. schools. Students have the leeway to pursue meaningful questions, and in the process become budding scientists, historians, mathematicians and authors. They master skills through authentic use and collaboration with peers in democratic learning communities.

Just what is inquiry-based learning, and how is it applied in

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early childhood settings? The following article outlines this curricular framework, defines its core elements through practical examples and contrasts inquiry-based and thematic classrooms. As inquiry-based instruction takes a sharper focus, the argument in favor of this dynamic child-centered approach becomes all the more compelling.

Inquiry-based curriculum is negotiated with the learners. The majority of American kindergartens revolve around teacher- or publisher-conceived thematic units. Ready-made units are often recycled from one year to the next, stored in boxes and bins containing blackline masters, posters and books. Typically, the activities are de-contextualized drills and step-by-step art projects that leave little room for student expression. In this arrangement, most student work is assessed by virtue of its similarity to the teacher's completed model, or classmates' work.

Curriculum in the inquiry-based classroom, by contrast, is *negotiated* with the learners themselves. Through systematic "kid-watching" (Goodman, 1978), discussion and questioning, the teacher develops a host of curricular invitations. The inquiry-based classroom is open to the possibilities posed, for example, by an interesting leaf, a visiting tadpole or a remarkable story.

Far from being a laissez-faire style of pedagogy, inquiry-based curriculum demands thoughtful, yet flexible, planning. Rather than scheduling the year's activities in advance, teachers "plan to plan," anticipating possible avenues of investigation and gathering the requisite materials (Harste, 1994).

Reggio Emilia educators describe the development of this *emergent curriculum* as a metaphorical game of "catch," in which the teacher is tossed a "ball" (representing interest) from her students. Presented this opportunity, she is forced to reflect on ways to return the pass—challenging the students, yet inviting them to continue the game (Filippini, 1990). Using her students as curricular informants, the teacher decides which of many possible directions to take a classroom investigation.

Inquiry-based curriculum is integrated conceptually. In an effort to eliminate unnecessary curricular segmentation, thematic classrooms integrate learning around a particular topic (e.g., dinosaurs). While thematic units are connected by virtue of this common strand, *conceptual* integration is often superficial. Compare the following classroom examples:

Thematic Kindergarten: Activities conducted during a class study of dinosaurs include counting dinosaur-shaped manipulatives (math), copying facts into "dinosaur books" cut by the teacher to resemble a T-Rex (language), and coloring a publisher's rendition of an Apatosaurus (art). These activities are completed by each member of the class, under careful teacher supervision.

Inquiry-based Kindergarten: Shared reading of a non-fiction dinosaur text spawns a number of small group activities. Several children write letters to the curator of a local museum, inquiring about dinosaurs that once were indigenous to the region. Another group, intrigued by passages describing dinosaurs of varying sizes, uses a tape measure to mark these dimensions on the playground with the help of the teaching assistant. Two boys examine the illustrations in a dinosaur Big Book, and attempt to classify various species as meat-eaters or plant-eaters by using their newly acquired knowledge about the shape of dinosaurs' teeth. The groups share their efforts in a class meeting at the conclusion of the period.

Integration in the inquiry-based setting clearly extends beyond the topic itself. These students, each exploring a personally relevant aspect of the text, develop skills through authentic use, rather than isolated drill. In doing so, each integrates his or her learning conceptually, constructing meaningful knowledge and prompting questions for further exploration.

Inquiry-based curriculum is neither a "course to be run," nor a body of facts to be memorized. Spurred perhaps by political calls to shift curricula "back to the basics," schools increasingly treat knowledge as a static body of facts. The bestselling series of books by E.D. Hirsch, all of which promise to provide "What Your Child Needs To Know..." in a given grade, are but one example of a mindset that promotes the notion of knowledge as content.

While the debate over content seems to have reached a fever pitch of late, John Dewey was on

Focus on Basics, Fall 1997

Thematic Teaching vs. Inquiry: A Comparison

Thematic Teaching	*Inquiry*
Curriculum revolves around teacher and/or publisher conceived units.	Negotiated curriculum reflects student interests, needs and questions.
Curriculum integrated by virtue of a common topical strand.	Curriculum integrated *conceptually.*
Traditional subject areas (math, science, etc.) seen as bodies of knowledge to be memorized—static, compartmentalized and separate.	Traditional subject areas (or "knowledge domains") lend perspective—seen as tools for learning.
Tasks completed as "whole group."	Invitations stem from individual needs and questions.
Outcomes entirely predetermined. Teacher is transmitter of knowledge; hence, student learning rarely exceeds teacher's initial knowledge base.	Many potential outcomes. Teacher is co-learner and facilitator.
Heavy reliance on linguistic means of expression.	Multi-modal expression of knowledge.
Individual is emphasized; autonomy, self-reliance and independence are highly valued.	Social nature of learning emphasized through collaboration, community and interdependence.
Unit of study is a discrete event. Typically boxed and stored for following year.	Learning is generative (leads learners in new directions) and spiraling (can be revisited).

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the mark long ago when he warned against passing along "second-hand knowledge" without regard to the inquiry processes used to ascertain these facts (Dewey, 1916). In *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey suggested that rote skills-learning presented in isolation from meaningful context rarely promotes the abilities needed to apply this knowledge in real-life situations.

Inquiry-based educators strive to develop tools for learning. In the course of classroom inquiry, students come to recognize the traditional subject areas (math, science, history, etc.) not as finite bodies of information, but rather as perspectives by which to view the topic at hand (Short, Harste & Burke, 1996). A discussion of what a mathematician might find interesting about insects, for example, might lead students to explore bugs of varying sizes, the population statistics of a particular species, or the distances traveled by migrating butterflies. How might a scientific perspective take the same study in different, yet equally compelling directions?

It would be a misinterpretation to conclude that "skills" have no place in the inquiry-based classroom. Just as whole language classrooms teach spelling or written conventions, inquirers master skills through repeated (and frequently explicit) demonstrations and the opportunity to apply their learning in meaningful contexts.

Inquiry-based curriculum promotes the multi-modal expression of knowledge. Through a pronounced emphasis on written and spoken language, American schools have traditionally promoted the linguistic expression of knowledge to the near exclusion of alternate means, such as art, music or movement. This verbo-centrism, so apparent in workbook drills and book reports, is perpetuated through the use of standardized testing as the primary means of assessment.

Early childhood educators traditionally have been more open to aesthetic forms of expression, embracing Gardner's theory of "multiple intelligences" (1985) and Reggio Emilia's "hundred languages of children" (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993).

Inquiry-based classrooms, while highly literate, encourage not only multiple modes of expression, but also the transfer, or "transmediation," of knowledge from one "sign system" to the next (Short, Harste & Burke, 1996). Inquirers express through art, for example, powerful messages that might remain untapped if left to linguistic means alone. Music or movement might express still more subtle understandings.

Educators must recognize not only the importance of aesthetic means of expression in the early childhood setting, but also the powerful role of play. Unable to fully express their learning in written or visual form, young children rely heavily on dramatic play as an outlet. While educators long have recognized the importance of play in the classroom setting, teacher-researchers are now taking note of the qualitative aspects of role-playing (Laird, 1996). Consider the knowledge expressed in the following example:

In the second week of a class investigation of dinosaurs, a group of children are playing together during

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recess. Aaron, who has assumed the role of Tyrannosaurus Rex, flashes his "sharp teeth" as he lumbers across the playground, his arms pulled tightly against his chest to resemble the beast's relatively puny upper limbs. Courtney is on her hands and knees, pretending to nibble on a shrub. She explains that she is Stegosaurus, a gentle plant-eater.

Both children have learned a great deal about dinosaurs. Each differentiates between meat-eating and plant-eating varieties, Aaron using his knowledge of teeth, and Courtney pretending to snack on a bush. Both understand that some dinosaurs walked on four legs (Stegosaurus), while others (T-Rex) stood upright. Early childhood educators must remain mindful of play's qualitative dimension, especially in light of pressures to introduce more academics into kindergarten.

Inquiry-based curriculum recognizes learning as a social process.

By its very nature, constructing a responsive classroom curriculum is a democratic and social process. Patrick Shannon (1993) describes democracy as a system in which people participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their lives. Democracy (and, hence, inquiry-based instruction) "involves participation and negotiation between equals where participants are not just given the choice among options determined by others behind the scenes, but are involved in the thinking behind the scenes" (Short & Burke, 1996).

To form a democratic classroom community, we must redraw the lines that traditionally divide the role of teacher and student. Because the learners themselves are involved in planning classroom activities, the teacher can no longer assume the role of all-knowing authority. Frequently, students will lead investigations in directions unforeseen by the teacher, some outside the realm of her own knowledge. Because of the broad range of possibilities, the teacher, while continuing to refocus the investigation, must also assume the role of co-learner, modeling the processes by which adults investigate their own questions. This interaction highlights the social nature of learning itself.

Kindergarten is ripe with opportunities for social learning. Unable to read fluently, students often explore their questions in collaboration with a parent, an older child, or even a more capable classmate. These young learners operate within "zones of proximal development" Vygotsky (1978), pushed to greater understanding through social interaction than would be possible individually.

Curricular invitations stem from the questions of individual learners.

So how do inquiry-based classrooms accommodate the interests and questions of so many different children? It would be impractical, at best, to suggest that a kindergarten classroom could revolve around 25 different topics at once. Inquiry-based educators work to meet the needs of each individual learner using whole group, small group and individual inquiries.

Whole Group Inquiries: Coordinating the interests of 20 or more 5-year-olds might be an impossible task. Through discussion and careful observation, however, teachers are likely to find topics of general interest within the classroom. Whatever the chosen topic, learners brought into the decision-making process can develop powerful connections to classroom activities. Students in thematic classrooms, where the teacher might decide to devote a week to a given topic, rarely, if ever, experience this powerful sense of ownership.

While a class topic might not reflect the interests of every learner, there remains considerable choice within the investigation itself. By "rotating" the subject through the various disciplines (Harste, 1994)—asking what a mathematician or scientist, for example, might find interesting about a topic—the teacher and students develop varied and personalized avenues of investigation.

Many curricular invitations are inevitably completed as a class. While thematic classrooms revolve primarily around projects designed to yield identical outcomes, most inquiry-based invitations are open-ended, producing wildly different results. Whereas students in a thematic kindergarten might be asked to color, cut and assemble a pre-made booklet on birds, their inquiry-based counterparts might be handed a stack of paper and asked to compose and illustrate books of their own. The difference might seem subtle—both groups made "bird books"—the philosophies that underlie the invitation, however, are different.

Small Group Inquiries: Small groups are useful both within the larger context of a full-class investi-

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gation (e.g., several students deciding to mark off the lengths of dinosaurs), and as an opportunity for more personalized investigations. The early childhood classroom, however, presents hurdles to these small group investigations. How can young children, the majority of whom cannot read independently, explore topics of interest without one-on-one interaction with the teacher? Many educators approach this dilemma as an opportunity for students to collaborate with outside sources.

"Expert Groups," facilitated by a parent volunteer, a sibling or a 5th-grade "helper," provide small groups of students with a chance to explore topics that might otherwise be overlooked by the class (Wuori & Wilkins, 1997). In these daily or weekly meetings, students and their older collaborators explore text sets, search the Internet and consult a variety of outside sources in an effort to shed new light on the student-selected topic. These groups might engage in project sessions, in which all class members meet in a full group to share the day's learning.

Individual Inquiries: Individual investigations, completed with the assistance of parents, allow each student to pursue deeply personal interests. Research conducted over several weeks is presented to the class by student "experts," who decide how they want to share their information. A week's worth of student-taught lessons is celebrated in the form of a "share fair" or "expert conference," at which visitors view the end products and engage in discussion with the "experts" (Wuori & Wilkins, 1997).

Inquiry-based curriculum is generative and spiraling. Inquiry-based learning is generative, prompting learners to pursue new avenues of investigation. Our dinosaur study, for example, might lead to an investigation of birds (as many experts consider birds to be the closest modern day relatives of the dinosaurs). A discussion of fossilized bones might spark questions about the human skeletal system, or geology. While inquiry may lead students in directions originally unforeseen by the teacher, one thing is certain: *the more we know, the more we wonder.*

Inquiry frequently not only propels students to ask more questions, but also spurs them to social action. A study of ocean life, for example, might lead students to "adopt" a whale, or to write lawmakers urging greater attention to the environmental damage caused by beachfront construction.

Finally, inquiry-based curriculum is a spiraling process that allows students to revisit a topic of interest. A kindergartner's questions about spiders at the beginning of the school year are likely to be different by the time the arachnids reappear in spring. Having conducted an earlier investigation, students will revisit the topic with more sophisticated eyes, their questions reflecting more complex understandings.

Conclusion

Inquiry-based instruction in the early childhood setting promises meaningful educational experiences, as opposed to shallow, topical integration of publisher-conceived thematic units. Implementing this dynamic curricular framework, however, requires a commitment from families, schools and most important, individual teachers who are willing to reexamine their own role in the classroom.

Empowered to pursue their own interests, kindergartners do more than master a set of "basic skills." They put them to use in an authentic context, developing a deeper understanding of not only the subject at hand, but also the tools of the mathematician, author and scientist.

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From the Vice President

Daddy's little girl: remembering and sharing

Dear ACEI Friends,

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit by my Daddy's hospital bed as he waited patiently (Ha! Ha!) to hear his doctor's next set of orders. During this time, I had the privilege of remembering my early years through Daddy's voice, eyes and heart. Oh, what I learned as we talked and laughed over the course of the next 18 days.

Just as little girls in the '90s adore their daddies, I still adore my Daddy and my Daddy adores me. I guess this special bond started with my name. My father named me; therefore, the bond began with the birth cry. Thanks to my mother, my relationship with my Daddy became a solid one. In addition to my given name, he decided that I would be his princess, a name that he still uses whenever he winks at me. Daddy has been my advocate, defender, loyal supporter, comforter, judge, nurturer, adviser and "on-call" mover. But more important, he has been my Daddy, not my buddy. I guess I owe Daddy a debt of gratitude for his relentless hold to this position throughout my formative and "tender" years. Twenty-twenty hindsight makes me appreciate Daddy's commitment, as well as my mother's commitment, to being my parents, rather than members of my buddy club.

During my many conversations with my Daddy, I discovered what I already knew—Daddy had always been very protective of my spirit. He made sure that the people who were a part of my world would not ask me to conform to every rule and regulation, but would allow me some degree of flexibility, so I could grow and enjoy life to the fullest. Daddy wanted the essence of my spirit to bubble and be reflected in my eyes, which he said twinkled as I talked, laughed, pondered and wondered. At the same time, he reminded me of the occasions, starting with age 3, when he had asked me to cooperate because my mother or teachers had had a difficult day and I was adding to their tension. Oh, do I remember these chats. My Daddy's eyes always connected with mine, so that he knew that I had received each engraved flash bulletin! Daddy's eyes still connect in a loving manner with mine even as he rests in his hospital bed.

Many little girls of the '90s have a father just like my Daddy. I witnessed similar interactions between fathers and little girls as I walked the hospital corridors, ate lunch in the hospital dining room, or sat in the hospital waiting room.

Although my father's physical condition has weakened, he still proudly assumes his role and duty as Daddy. He reminded me of our lively family discussions, which were and are a part of our meals, gatherings and celebrations. Now the tables are turning and it is my time to be there for Daddy. I must answer the following questions:

- Will I continue to need and value Daddy's advice? Yes!
- Will I protect Daddy as much as he protected me when I needed and wanted it most? Yes!
- Will I step in, whether invited or not, to lend a helping hand? Yes!
- Will I be Daddy's advocate and loyal supporter? Yes!
- Will I protect Daddy's dignity and spirit? Yes!
- Will I continue to call him Daddy although I am now "39 plus"? Yes!

Thanks to Daddy, I still have a twinkle that is visible to others through my eyes, voice and nonverbal gestures. I appreciate these forever gifts that my Daddy has given to me. My family and future students will benefit from Daddy's imprint on my life, heart and spirit. Best wishes for a good day, week and month.

Fondly,

Jacqueline Blackwell
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Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Pre-K and K* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the education and development of children ages 4 to 6. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered for publication, please send them to:

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A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

Coping with Speech Difficulties

Do you have a student with speech difficulties? If so, the following tips from Katherine L. Martin, certified speech-language pathologist and author of the book *Does My Child Have a Speech Problem?*, may be useful to help you, and the child's parents, to cope with the problem.

If the child has a long-term or temporary stuttering or speech problem, try to eliminate these common reactions:

- pained facial expressions
- becoming very still during a stuttering or dysfluent moment
- expressing pity
- expressing guilt over stuttering
- reinforcing or punishing stuttering by giving in to requests, withholding rewards or spanking the child
- finishing the sentence for the child or filling in with the needed word
- interrupting the child
- asking the child to stop and start over
- telling the child, "think before you speak"

continued on page 3 . . .

Creating a True Multicultural Setting

Teresa Fayden, Kindergarten Teacher
Santa Fe, New Mexico

One day as I was leading my kindergartners to their classroom, the principal happened to be standing close by, watching us. I was satisfied that the children were speaking in reasonable tones and walking in the required straight line. Suddenly, one of the American Indian boys broke into a joyous dance and song, one that is native to his culture and one that he performs regularly in his *pueblo* (American Indian village). I had a quick decision to make—was I going to push the European American value of following the rules and "fitting in" with the group or would I reject that traditional school value and honor the child's expression of who he was? "What a fine dancer you are," I said. The child beamed and the rest of the class, perceiving my acceptance, joined him in dancing and singing back to our room.

Two Approaches to Diversity

Bowman (1994, p. 219) calls the dilemma I faced the "Two Approaches to Diversity." The first approach is based on Kohlberg's "cultural transmission" theory, and it requires that children be socialized into a common culture, thus assuring that they all have equal social opportunities. This misguided need for equality transforms a heritage into a handicap (Meier & Cazden, 1982), because its main objective is to eliminate any differences that might act as barriers (Perez, 1994). This practice usually is associated with traditional schools and standardized curricula (Bowman, 1994). It is also reflected in Hirsch's Cultural Literacy and "the immediate objective it proposes, that is, the acquisition by every American child of the alleged common 'traditional' information,

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attitudes and values shared by all literate Americans..." (Smith, 1993, p. 37). It also reflects the old belief in the melting pot—that children and adults should abandon their original cultures in favor of joining the larger group and becoming "American."

The melting pot approach limits everyone's choices because it frequently espouses a "right" way to do things. Thus, this approach can be damaging to families whose lifestyles differ from those of the mainstream culture (Manfredi/Petitt, 1994). The melting pot was carried to extremes in the past when the United States government instituted education policies specifically designed to eliminate the cultures of American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and African Americans (Spring, 1993).

The second approach to teaching and learning (Bowman, 1994) values individuality and diversity in learning styles and teaching methods. Based on a constructivist view, this approach stresses that children spontaneously reconstruct and direct their own learning, and that this occurs "as a product of [children's] interactions within their physical, social and cultural environments" (Steffe & Tzen, 1994, p. 101).

These two education views, "uniformity versus diversity" (Bowman, 1994, p. 220), are argued about and played out in many schools and political arenas today. Wilson (1993) believes that "the current struggle for reform will either tend toward the conservative-led intensification of Eurocentrism . . . or toward an increased focus on non-Western perspectives" (p. 104). Most early childhood educators opt for the individualized, developmentally appropriate approach. There is, however, a disturbing resurgence of emphasis on basic skills, to the detriment of higher order thinking. This resurgence is, in part, based on the belief that poor and minority children need to "catch up" to their middle class white counterparts, and that the only way to help these "at-risk" children is to teach them the "three R's" (reading, writing and artithmetic).

Not only is this method ineffective (Bowman, 1994; Nieto, 1994), but it is also a subtle form of racism and/or chauvinism. The implication is that these cultures (usually African American, Hispanic or Native American) produce children who are lacking in some way because of genetic interiority or deprivation (Nieto, 1994). When the Indian boarding schools were established in the latter part of the 19th century, the intimation was that children raised on reservations were either morally or culturally lacking (Spring, 1993), and this view of minorities has not diminished. According to Nieto (1994), "If students are perceived to be 'deficient,' then the educational environment will reflect a no-nonsense back-to-basics drill orientation" (p. 100). Botstein (1993) addresses this problem by stating, "What must be done? I believe that one must include diverse traditions because of a shift in American history demographically" (p. 33). Teachers should be aware of the cultures and values in their communities so that they can adjust their methods and be in accordance with the *children's* upbringing, rather than their own.

"Teachers should be aware of the cultures and values in their communities so that they can adjust their methods and be in accordance with the children's upbringing, rather than their own.

Pseudomulticulturalism

Several years ago, the teachers at my school received a directive that National Hispanic Week would be celebrated and that, because our student body was 50 percent Hispanic, we should all be involved in "Hispanic activities." I went to the library and selected a Big Book in which a

Hispanic family was featured for our shared reading, took out the Hispanic Family block people, asked the Spanish teacher for photographs of Spanish children and learned a Hispanic song to teach the children. In short, I planned a Hispanic Thematic Mini-Unit.

Unfortunately, this is not authentic multiculturalism. My isolated week-long event would do little to teach the children about respecting diversity, yet these isolated cultural "thematic" units are the desired and accepted curricula for early, and even later, childhood. Such disjointed curriculum has several names: *pseudomulticulturalism* (Boutte & McCormick, 1992), because of its inauthenticity; *tourist multicultural curriculum*, because classes "visit" other cultures and then return to their European American curriculum (Derman-Sparks, 1993/94; Perez, 1994); and the *play-kit approach* (Clark, DeWolf & Clark, 1992), wherein certain "props" are taken out to represent a particular culture.

The problem with this type of curriculum is that the children form "simplistic generalizations" (Derman-Sparks, 1993/94), p. 70) that lead to stereotypes. Teachers should scrutinize their thematic units, especially those that deal with other cultures, for signs of pseudomulticulturalism, such as:

Disconnection. The activity was added to the curriculum at a special time, rather than integrated into all aspects of the environment.

Patronization. The culture was represented as "quaint" or "exotic."

Tricialization. Cultural activities studied are disconnected from the daily life of the people and, therefore, trivialize that culture.

Misrepresentation. Images of a group are too few to adequately represent the variety within the group. (Derman-Sparks, 1993/94, p. 69-70)

Authentic multicultural activities are ongoing and integrated daily, both in formal and informal activities; multicultural ideas are "caught," not "taught," and are developed through everyday experiences, rather than formal lessons. They should be thoroughly integrated throughout all activities every day—not only in fragmented units (Boutte & McCormick, 1992).

Implementing Multiculturalism

Teacher Reflection

An important element in teacher education is reflection on who we are. As teachers, we must first examine our biases. We need to push beyond the constraints of our own backgrounds and seek to educate ourselves on the values, hopes, ambitions and feelings of the communities we serve. "Teachers in all disciplines must sort out the con-

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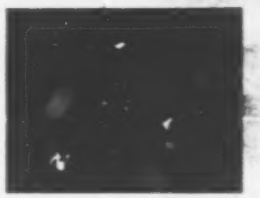
- pretending the dysfluency does not exist
- expressing impatience and anger.



Instead, try these behaviors:

- listen not so much to the child's speech, but to the content of what he is trying to express
- if the child is in the habit of speaking rapidly, attempt to slow the pace down by waiting before answereing. Silently count to three before you respond. Say, "Take your time and go easy. I have time to listen to you."
- maintain eye contact when the child experiences a dysfluent or stuttering moment
- be willing to talk to the child about his stuttering or dysfluency concerns when they arise
- do not interrupt the child
- do not punish or shame the child about his stuttering or dysfluency
- if the child has a long-term stuttering problem, seek the assistance of a speech-language pathologist
- be sure the teacher and family are included in the treatment plan
- help the child accept his or her speaking difficulties with minimal guilt or shame.

Does My Child Have a Speech Problem? *is available at bookstores, through Independent Publishers Group, 814 N. Franklin St., Chicago, IL 60610 or by calling 800-888-4741.*

tradictions and inconsistencies that we have learned through our own education, and we must resolve to view the world from the perspective of students, as well as from our own" (Chaplin, 1993, p. 196). We need to examine our responses to the children and ensure that they are equitable. While we inevitably demonstrate our personal values to the children we serve, we never want to override the values of their community. "Teachers and adults can start by taking a close look at their own behavior" (Baker, 1994, p. 34). Keeping a reflective journal may help teachers gain insight into their feelings and reactions to daily classroom situations.

Providing Supportive Environments

Teachers should provide supportive environments in which children feel that their cultures are fully represented. What do the children see when they enter the room? Can they find themselves represented there? This is important because "children from dominated cultures often failed in school because they considered the school to be representative of the dominant white culture" (Spring, 1993, p. 101).

Teaching acceptance means teaching about differences and sameness not only in cultures, but also in gender, class, race and ability levels (Robinson, 1993). "The educational community is charged with the responsibility of educating students to understand and accept one another's differences. This includes learning about physical impairments and attitudinal barriers that prevent people from developing relationships with one another" (Hardaway, 1993, p. 129).

Creating Equitable Classrooms

The following are some recommendations for creating an equitable environment in an early childhood classroom:

The doll area should contain Asian, Latino, Native American, African American and Anglo dolls, as well as dolls of differing abilities. Toy equipment needs to reflect various disabilities, such as doll and child-sized wheelchairs, walkers, a cane and a stuffed seeing eye dog, glasses for the dolls, crutches, leg and arm braces, and prostheses. Many early childhood catalogs carry these items.

Art and writing centers need to contain crayons, markers, paper and clay in multicultural skin tones, various color and texture hair yarns, and a variety of materials to make differing eye and hair colors.

The reading area should reflect a plethora of books that tell stories of children from diverse cultures and of differing physical abilities, as well as those that represent children in real-life situations, such as divorce, unemployment, homelessness, strife within the household, alcoholism, etc. Contemporary and historical images of different ethnicities should be presented.

Block and Duplo™ areas should contain block people of many ethnicities. Children should learn that the block people can perform any occupation, regardless of gender. Animals should be representative of many geographic areas, such as deserts, mountains, rainforests and plains, with an emphasis on endangered spe-

Resources

Websites for teachers & students

www.ebig.com
The Britannica Internet Guide provides users with an efficient and authoritative Internet navigation service. By offering access to quality Web sites that contain valuable information, the Guide provides the tools to find what you are looking for on the Web.

www.station.sony.com/wonderland/
Designed for the youngest Internet browsers, this section of the Sony Wonder's Wonderland site includes music, stories and simple activities for 2- to 5-year-olds.

www.teachersatrandom.com
This resource from Random House Children's Publishing provides K-4 teachers with materials to enhance the classroom experience for young readers. Features include teachers' and readers' guides, tips from other teachers, special offers and a Classroom Club, which offers free displays and chances to win prizes for your classroom.

www.sandiegozoo.org
This site from the Zoological Society of San Diego lets children take a virtual trip to the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park and includes several games.

cies. Because we are striving to have children view life through a morally responsible lens, it behooves us to teach them accountability, not only to fellow humans, but also to the animals and environment.

The classroom environment should reflect the society in which the children live. The teacher should highlight not only differences but also similarities, so that the children understand their connections with a common humanity and thus can be empathetic. *The Anti-Bias Curriculum* (Derman-Sparks & the ABC Task Force, 1989) guides teachers in implementing a multiculturally sensitive approach in the classroom. The essential quality of this program is that the children learn not only how to combat inequality when it is directed towards them, but also how they themselves can become peacemakers and transmitters of fair practices.

Teachers should enlist the help of community members in order to form school/home partnerships and learn how to acquire culturally relevant toys. Because my kindergarten class is divided fairly equally between Hispanic and Native American children, I have brought these cultures into my classroom. Instead of ordering from catalogs with my yearly allotment of money, I commissioned a community member to make doll-sized versions of the traditional Pueblo Indian cradleboards and swings. Our dress-up clothes consist of everyday American Indian, Hispanic and Euro-American clothing, as well as formal attire, such as Indian *mantas* (dresses), ceremonial men's shirts and traditional Hispanic wedding clothes. Teachers also must be aware of community cultural events, in order to have more of an understanding about the children's lives.

> If the teacher has some understanding of the child's traditional value set and worldview, she is better prepared to help children translate these values into behaviors that will facilitate achievement in school as well as success later in the world of work. (Soldier, 1992, p. 19)

Activities

Classroom activities can involve the community. Because tortillas are a staple in the community where I teach, and because we were involved in a "Breads Around the World" unit, I invited my students' families to come to school and help the children make the tortillas. Native language speaking was encouraged, as usual. The parents became the teachers—they were in charge of the lesson because they were the experts. This led them to a place of importance and responsibility within the school setting. On the surface, this activity may appear pseudomulticultural. The basic premise here, however, is honoring the children, their families and activities in which they take part on a regular basis. It honored me to relegate the role of teacher to a mother who recently had moved to the U.S. from Mexico. I saw her transformed from a shy woman into someone who became very animated and talkative as she helped the children make tortillas.

Other activities can be planned that involve the community. As another example, when the class studied "Breads Around the World" the students visited the Indian *pueblo* to learn how to bake bread "the old way." This way of baking bread has lasted throughout the generations, and is a common activity on the pueblo during their ceremonial feast days and other special occasions. Most of the families have an outdoor oven adjacent to their homes, and bread baking in this way is familiar to all the children. We involved parents, friends, extended family and the senior citizens of the village. In fact, as the people of the village saw us involved in the activity, they volunteered their services, and soon we had many helpers.

Both of the above activities are "alive" within the community; that is, the people partake of them naturally and on a frequent basis. Teachers must be careful, when studying other cultures apart from their own, not to present out-of-date customs as if they are still current. If we did that, we would be studying a culture frozen in time. When we utilize activities that are currently "in use," such as the ones described above, we can help bridge the gap between school and home.

Because my students live in a specific environment, and because environments often exert influences on culture, we also celebrate our surroundings. Children can collect and incorporate into the classrom outdoor items that are unique to their area (Billman, 1992). In our area, sunflowers flourish every September, and because they will die quickly, we pick them, place them in vases and

put them on our tables. We take them outside and paint them "á la Van Gogh." The results are masterpieces in their own right. In addition, we count the petals and make graphs and we count and eat the seeds. We also study and collect native plants and make weavings out of them.

One successful theme-based activity that we use throughout the year is called "All Colors Are Beautiful," which is outlined in *The Anti-Bias Curriculum* (Derman-Sparks & the ABC Task Force, 1989). It depicts ways we can help children appreciate different skin, eyes and hair colors.

The children look at themselves in mirrors and place their hands together, observing the varying colors of skin, while we discuss the uniqueness and beauty of each tone. Other activities follow: making clay figures out of multicultural clay that represents differing skin colors, drawing people with varying skin tones using multicultural crayons and markers, using buttons to represent contrasting eye colors, making use of different color yarns for hair, making people figures from multicultural skin-colored paper, and painting our portraits using skin-toned tempera paint.

Respect for differing skin colors is elaborated through the use of frequent discussions, books, posters, photographs and the general everyday demeanor of fairness and equity that must take precedence in the classroom. One must especially help all children, not only those of color, to "abolish the rightness of whiteness assumption" (Greenberg, 1992, p. 79), and help them appreciate who they are, as well as help them learn to look within themselves for power.

I am fortunate because my principal and administration encourage these activities, and so, at both our school and in our district, "true" multiculturalism is becoming the norm. The possibilities are limitless. The teacher only needs the desire and the motivation to honor the children. A good deal of learning takes place by trial and error, but the results are worth it. If the children experience true multiculturalism in the microcosm of the classroom, they will be better prepared to practice it later on in life.

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teachers & students: redefining roles & expectations, part 1

Dear ACEI Friends,

During the past few weeks, I have had the privilege and opportunity of talking and working with both younger students (under age 8) and older students (preservice and inservice teachers). All of these encounters and interactions have made me keenly aware that teachers and students are redefining their roles and expectations and blurring the distinctions between one another: Teachers view themselves as advanced students, while students, regardless of age, see themselves as teachers, too.

I have witnessed teachers and students, from pre-kindergarten to graduate school, sharing their visions for what creates, or could create, great learning experiences. To the amazement of most people, students' and teachers' visions were similar. They all wanted experiences and environments that:

- offer challenges and sensitivity
- invite wonder
- promote dialogue
- provide encouragement
- nurture flexibility
- honor struggles
- support humor and giggles
- celebrate mini and major victories.

Although students and teachers share visions, they are exploring those visions in different ways. Teachers and students alternate between "leading" and "following" in unpredictable and unbelievable patterns.

This evolving partnership between teachers and students will result in a permanently rewritten script. Students and teachers are now considering challenges as opportunities to explore additional, or new, options. No longer is the answer "not possible at this time" accepted as the final word. Teachers and students are now choosing to seize and accept shared ownership of their destiny. Their experiences are surrounded by an ongoing, unwavering commitment to personal and group responsibility, integrity, freedom, sensitivity, compassion and encouragement.

Just like many of you, I have encouraged these changing roles and expectations for teachers and students at all levels, especially in my undergraduate and graduate early childhood education classes. Therefore, I formally invited my students to share ownership with me for what we will do, question, discover, explore and learn together. For many students who are new to the field of education, this request is a new and frightening experience. Realizing this fact, I must be ever mindful that any modification in the teacher/student relationship, especially a significant one, must be done gradually to ensure that everyone is comfortable.

In order to reduce the anxiety associated with these changing roles and expectations, I offer a simple, yet effective, plan of action to:

- understand and support the need for slow changes
- listen and hear different voices
- honor the need to struggle with new and different issues and ideas
- refocus the shared vision when it no longer serves a purpose
- explore evolving definitions for teacher and student in the teaching and learning process
- regularly push beyond the boundaries of the established operating framework to capture new perspectives
- enjoy this day and the new views to the fullest!

After reading this column, perhaps you would like to share your experiences with me. Please feel free to call me (317-274-6830), write me (School of Education, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN 46202-5155), or send me E-mail (jblackwe@iupui.edu).

Warmest regards,
Jacqueline Blackwell,
Vice President Representing
Infancy/Early Childhood

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Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Pre-K and K* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the education and development of children ages 4 to 6. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered for publication, please send them to:

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ages 4-6

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

Georgia's Voluntary Prekindergarten: A Collaborative Effort

In October, Georgia's prekindergarten program was selected to receive a $100,000 grant for "Innovations in American Government," an awards program sponsored by the Ford Foundation and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Initiated by Governor Zell Miller in 1992 to help "at-risk" children start school ready to learn, the program is now open to all 4-year-olds. Funded by the state lottery in 1997, the program budget is now $211,000,000 and serves 60,000 children. Georgia is the only state to attempt an early childhood program on such a large scale.

Grant applicants must choose to implement one of four curriculum models: High Scope, Creative Curriculum, Bank Street or Montessori. Every attempt is made to ensure that children are engaged in developmentally appropriate tasks. Hands-on active learning is strongly encouraged.

An initial grant (approximately $58,000) covers salaries for a full-time certified teacher and an assistant, an optional Family Service Coordinator, supplies and equipment and, after one year, a computer and playground equipment.

continued on page 3...

Today's Playground— *A Look at the Past To Prepare for the Future*

Sally C. Hurwitz, Faculty Associate,
College of Education, Arizona State University West

Today, a new playground movement is sweeping across the United States. The call is for an end to the traditional playgrounds that are the staple of nearly every municipal park and public school. Unfortunately, playground equipment and design have not kept pace with current research on child development. This article will highlight historical trends in playground development, and provide a context and purpose for restructuring American playgrounds to support children's play.

Historical Trends

At the turn of the century, with the acceptance of play as an important aspect of child development, educators paid increasing consideration to the notion of a child-centered curriculum, as described by Hall and Dewey (Rozwenc & Bender, 1973). Dewey understood that children "learn by doing," and that play gave them the ability to "do" within the confines of an education system. Recess emerged as a play time within the curriculum, which gave children of the same age a chance to use the playground together every day at a specific time. Long periods of "free play" were offered on the playground for

younger children, and less time was spent on academic subjects (Lane, 1938).

Since play had historically been the backbone of their curriculum, preschool and kindergarten teachers understood the importance of play much earlier than primary teachers did. At the turn of the century, public school primary curriculum was still limited to reading, writing and arithmetic. As the education system sought to educate the "whole child," however, schools could no longer continue to ignore the child's physical, social and emotional development in favor of the child's mental abilities. Such an approach represented a radical departure from the nature of formal schooling at the time.

By 1910, many playground equipment catalogs were available. The equipment was made primarily of steel, iron or wood. Decades later, the debate between metal and wood still rages. The 1928 National Recreation Association recommended that elementary school playgrounds include an 8-foot-high slide, a balance beam, a horizontal bar, a horizontal ladder, swings and optional play equipment, such as see-saws, rings and low climbers (Frost & Wortham, 1988). This equipment set the pattern for school playgrounds for decades to come, and still can be found on some modern school yards.

Within the last 30 to 40 years, values changed again, this time from a play curriculum for young children to a strictly academic one. Educators now are trying to reverse that trend, particularly in the younger grades, where more emphasis on play within the curriculum is developing. We have observed the huge success of the European-style playgrounds, seen the inadequacies of traditional American playgrounds, and are learning about new inventive playground types supported by play research (Frost, 1978). Today's play movement is a grassroots effort of teachers, education reformers, parents, children, designers and architects.

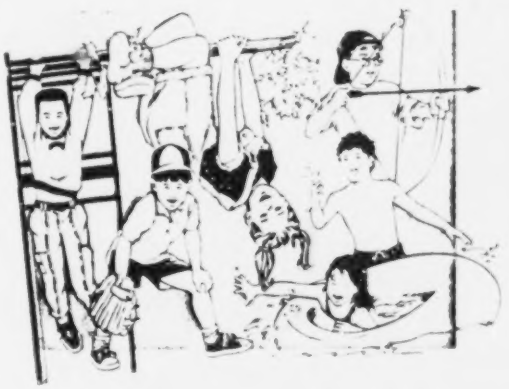
Today's basic American playground is very similar in design to those available in the 1920s. Typical equipment includes jungle gyms, slides, swings and multipurpose ball fields. Hence, playgrounds are exercise-oriented, interspersed with areas of concrete. There is very little to encourage dramatic or constructive play.

Traditional fixed equipment limits the variety of play experiences, although children will begin to experiment with new uses, climbing up the slide and swinging on poles. Furthermore, many primary playgrounds are geared to the middle elementary school student. These playgrounds are developmentally inappropriate for the younger children, and are considered the unsafest of all playgrounds (Frost & Wortham, 1988).

European, or adventure-style, playgrounds, such as those that are popular in England, Sweden and Denmark, are child-centered. A play leader is on-hand at all times to lend assistance if needed. These playgrounds generally are found in vacant, fenced-in lots. A large facility is on site to store tools and supplies. The materials available for creative play are throw-aways,

Today's play movement is a grassroots effort of teachers, education reformers, parents, children, designers and architects.

scraps and found objects that the children are free to use in any way they see fit. Common activities include building, digging, gardening, animal care, water play, outdoor cooking and play with sand, dirt and water (Vance, 1982). As you might imagine, no two adventure playgrounds look alike, but their appeal is overwhelming. Their "junkyard" look is a major drawback, which may be the reason for their limited success in the United States.



Supporting Children's Play

Across the United States a variety of new and exciting playgrounds are being built. School districts are looking long and hard at their current playgrounds, and are finally seeing them as unacceptable from both developmental and safety standpoints. An increase in the number of injuries and resulting lawsuits has forced districts to pay special attention to their playground equipment and maintenance (see Frost & Sweeney, 1996). Parents are demanding playgrounds that offer more than just an opportunity to exercise. Additionally, teachers and education reformers have urged making the playground an extension of classroom learning.

Early childhood educators understand the power that play holds for the developing child. Research has shown that play promotes cognitive development, problem-solving, language development, creativity, cooperation and fine and gross motor skills (Johnson et al., 1987). This new awareness of the potential for play as a vehical for learning has greatly inspired the new American playground movement. A quiet revolution is sweeping schools and parks across the country. School yards and city parks are making the change from old to new. Gone are the metal jungle gyms, dome structures, see-saws and elaborate wooden structures that were so favored 20 years ago. We are now seeing the post/deck/event type structures that combine many pieces of equipment into one unit. This type of equipment is favored by playground planners, al-

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Continuation grants fund all of the above, except $1,200 for supplies.

A local coordinating council (participation is optional) is composed of Prekindergarten Project Directors, as well as personnel from Head Start, DFACS, city and county public schools, private for profit and not for profit child care centers. The Health Department seeks to work collaboratively to meet the needs of the children and parents. The program, which is fully lottery funded, is free. The council is one example where this collaboration effort really pays off. Each month, the council meets to share information, discuss policy and organize political activities.

Consultants work with each grant site to ensure that the curriculum stays age- and developmentally appropriate. It is *not* a watered-down kindergarten curriculum. After observing in both a public school kindergarten and a High Scope classroom at our campus laboratory school, one of the students perceptively said, "In the kindergarten the kids can never move around. In your center, they hardly ever sit down!"

Georgia has experienced a high student drop-out rate and increasing teenage pregnancy. It is estimated that every dollar invested in the program saves seven dollars in future costs related to education and other services.

For more information, contact Susan Tomai or Kathy Mimbury at 202-467-6600, or Trudy Schafer at 617-495-0557, or visit the Atlanta Office of School Readiness web site (http://www.osr.state.ga.us).

though it provides children with limited opportunities for creative and dramatic play.

Administrators and city park planners prefer this new equipment type for a variety of reasons. First, the safety record is very high, thus reducing the possibility of personal-injury lawsuits. Second, the bright colors used on the equipment units are appealing. Finally, because the equipment is "prepackaged," the options, however numerous, are predetermined. While the new equipment is colorful and virtually maintenance free, how does it *really* differ from the equipment it replaces? It *is* time for playground change, but is a post/deck/event playground the only answer?

Despite the delightful appearance and safety record of the post/deck/event structures, there is more to an ideal playground than a single structure or two. Primary schools have much to learn from child care centers' play yards. Here, too, you may find a post/deck/event structure, but you will also find large blocks of wood or plastic cubes for climbing, balancing boards, ramps, and

a carpenter's bench with a supply of wood and tools for building. You may also see an easel for painting, sand toys for the sand areas, balls, jump ropes, pulleys and buckets, and a water table. All of these elements are reminiscent of the adventure, or European-style, playgrounds.

Consideration also should be given to providing landscaped areas that are aesthetically pleasing, with gardens and vegetation that support young children's exploration.

Structures and equipment, however, are only two of a playground's components. Consideration also should be given to providing landscaped areas that are aesthetically pleasing, with gardens and vegetation that support young children's exploration. Staff, too, is an important element. Teachers need to be an active part of the outside play experience. Social skills, language skills and math and science experiences are all enriched by the presence of a capable teacher who sets the stage and participates in children's play.

Redesigning Playgrounds for Children

Today, we anticipate playgrounds that are developmentally appropriate, safe and meaningful, and that allow the classroom curriculum to be explored outdoors. This will be a long, difficult process of change. During the past two decades, educators have begun to reevaluate play within the curriculum once again. Educators argued for an integrated curriculum of work and play for primary age children, and some parents and administrators are beginning to listen.

As school staff and parents start to take a critical look at their current playgrounds, they should ask themselves:

- Does our school playground

promote cognitive development, problem-solving skills, language development, creativity and cooperation, as well as fine and gross motor skills?
- Is the equipment developmentally appropriate? Are there enough equipment and materials for the number of children who use the playground?
- Is there a variety of outdoor experiences available every day?
- Is there mobile equipment for children to create their own structures?
- Are there opportunities for gardening and play with raw materials such as sand, dirt and water?
- Are there quiet areas for solitary play, as well as areas for completing classroom activities outdoors?
- Is there adequate staff available on the playground to support the play of children with materials and equipment, and to allow adult participation?

These questions may help focus your efforts on creating a playground environment that meets the play needs of the children.

The value of play cannot be overemphasized. It is on the playground that children use the skills taught in the classroom, and where they learn new ones with every activity. It is on the playground that children build and develop the social and emotional traits essential to group interaction. Playgrounds are the backdrop for language development, imaginative play, motor skills and cognitive growth. Public schools need to support this development of the whole child by building playgrounds that meet these developmental needs, and by giving special consideration to structure, equipment, landscaping and staff.

When we design the playground of tomorrow we need to stop worrying about what is important to adults and put more emphasis on children. Children should be given every opportunity to learn and develop in all aspects of play. When we deny appropriate play experiences to children because of our concerns about supervision, insurance, aesthetics and acquiring academics, we deny them important opportunities (Wardle, 1990).

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Resources

Web sites for teachers & students

www.ldonline.org
This Web site from WETA, a Washington, D.C., public television and radio station, is dedicated to improving the lives of those with learning disabilities. "LD OnLine" was recently recognized with an Equality, Dignity and Independence (EDI) award for its pioneering efforts to provide information about learning disabilities via the Internet, thereby furthering public understanding of disability issues. In addition to in-depth information, the site offers audio clips from LD experts, bulletin boards for exchanging ideas, recommended publications and activities for children, state and national resource listings, and a calendar of LD-related events.

www.station.sony.com/wonderland/
Designed for the youngest Internet browsers, this section of the Sony Wonder's Wonderland site includes music, stories and simple activities specifically designed for 2- to 5-year-olds.

www.teachersatrandom.com
This resource from Random House Children's Publishing provides Kindergarten-4th grade teachers with materials to enhance the classroom experience for young readers. Features include teachers' and readers' guides, tips from other teachers, special offers and a Classroom Club, which offers free displays and chances to win prizes for your classroom.

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Magazines, videos and reports for pre-k & k

The ABC's of Kindergarten Readiness

A video that prepares 4- to 6-year-olds for the the social and emotional transitions they can expect when entering kindergarten, *The ABC's of Kindergarten Readiness*, was introduced this past November at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference in Anaheim, California. "Remember your first day in a new job, the night before college or maybe changing schools as a child—it doesn't matter how much experience you have or how confident you are, you still get nervous before making a transition to a new environment," notes Bob Brannon, founder of Educational Video and Books, LLC, makers of the video.

The ABC's of Kindergarten Readiness features Zippy the Backpack™, an animated character who guides children through the exciting world of kindergarten with his friends Rosie the Ruler™ and Peppy the Pencil™. Older children (7- to 9-year-olds) give the viewer practical tips and advice about important matters, such as finding the bathroom and taking care of school supplies.

The ABC's of Kindergarten Readiness is the first release in a video series titled "School Rules!™." The entire series uses the same format of older children and animated characters teaching/helping younger children and covers topics ranging from hygiene to etiquette. The series is produced by The Center for Telecommunications and Video at the University of Tennessee.

For more information, contact Educational Video and Books, LLC, P.O. Box 3250, Jackson, TN 38303; 800-944-5332; Fax: 800-260-7550; or visit their Web site (www.schoolrules.com).

CLICK

The publishers of the magazines *Muse*, *Cricket*, *Spider*, *Ladybug* and *Babybug* introduce their newest creation, *CLICK*. This bimonthly magazine is geared toward beginning readers, ages 3 to 7, and is devoted to discovery and exploration.

"We believe that kids benefit from the earliest possible introduction to knowledge and ideas," says Bob Harper, president of the Cricket Magazine Group. "*CLICK* has been created to provide that experience and to make it exciting and attractive. Enjoying this magazine is something that parents and children can do together at home, in a relaxed and comfortable environment. *CLICK* is more than facts. It presents big ideas that kids love to discover."

Each issue features a combination of original stories, poems, illustrations and photography, as well as a fold-out poster that reflects one of the issue's themes. The magazine also features an 8-page Parents' Guide, which provides additional ideas and resources to help enhance children's understanding.

CLICK is available in bookstores and by subscription. For more information, contact The Cricket Magazine Group, 332 South Michigan Ave., Ste. 2000, Chicago, IL 60604; 800-827-0227.

National Center for Education Releases Report on Kindergarten Readiness

The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) recently released a report that examines whether delayed kindergarten entry and kindergarten retention are related to subsequent school performance in the 1st and 2nd grades. *The Elementary School Performance and Adjustment of Children Who Enter Kindergarten Late or Repeat Kindergarten: Findings from National Surveys* includes data from the 1993 and 1995 National Household Education Surveys. The data is based on reports by parents of 1st- and 2nd-grade students.

Single copies of the report are available from the National Library of Education (800-424-1616; Fax: 202-219-1696), the National Education Data Resource Center (703-845-3151) or by visiting the NCES Web site (http://nces.ed.gov/ncespub1.html.

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From the Vice President

In the best interests of children: listening to and supporting their teachers

Dear ACEI Friends,

Through the years, many educators have heard the words: "Whatever we do must be done in the best interests of children; we must demonstrate the best practices." Although we all understand these words, there is something missing that needs our consideration. We need to both offer, and give, special attention to the teachers of young children. Special attention means finding ways to listen to and support these teachers so that they are free to explore, take risks, accept new opportunities or challenges, reinvent themselves, and experience success as they develop curricula and plan programs for young children.

As we offer and give this attention to teachers of young children, we must acknowledge the difference between offering and giving attention. Offering attention may set the stage for what can, and could, happen. It opens windows of possibilities to traveled, and less traveled, pathways and charted, or uncharted, courses. On the other hand, giving attention may send the message that such deliveries, whether scheduled or unscheduled, will require no additional follow-up because each transaction is complete in itself.

Offering attention requires a different, or changing, mindset by those individuals who either supervise, mentor or assist these teachers of young children. The goals should be to provide for the children's best interest, and to demonstrate an array of best practices. Individuals in appointed, and self-appointed, positions must be willing to pay attention to the spoken, and unspoken, needs of teachers while balancing the varied needs of the students. A commitment to help these teachers must be a top priority. They must see a clean slate that allows them to identify their needs as they work with young children and their families, as well as colleagues, administrators, volunteers and the community at large. We are ever mindful that we must focus on what is "in the best interests of young children."

Supporting teachers of young children requires a multi-faceted plan, which sets the stage for creating a layered environment that nurtures the minds, spirits, bodies and hearts of teachers. This layered environment reinforces these messages:

1. Erase from the rule book the need to receive permission before engaging in creative activities.
2. Celebrate the memories of your own childhood, as well as your students' childhoods.
3. Enjoy the challenge of riddles and puzzles that you encounter as you work with young children. Remember that the solutions may be completely buried.
4. Dare to dream and follow your passions. Occasionally, jump *before* you look.
5. Reconsider minor irritations and obstacles as unexpected opportunities for adventure.
6. Share the "ha! ha!" and "ah ha!" moments with others.
7. Live in the present, and share hope for the future, while learning from the past.

As we ponder what is in children's best interests, please remember to listen to and support their teachers. This combination approach produces unbelievable outcomes that can enhance the learning, living and loving chances for both young children and their teachers.

Warmest regards,

Jacqueline Blackwell,
Vice President Representing
Infancy/Early Childhood
(317-274-6830;
E-mail: jblackwe@iupui.edu)

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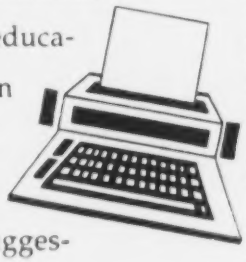
Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Pre-K & K* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the education and development of children ages 4 to 6. Editorial assistance is available if needed.



If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered for publication, please send them to:

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ages 4-6

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

Child Care and the Health Hazards of Environmental Smoke

Child care providers are responsible for protecting children in their care from infectious diseases and injuries. This includes protecting them from environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), also known as second-hand smoke. Because tobacco use is a major health epidemic, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) focused on smoking prevention during its annual Child Health Month, last October.

In addition, the AAP supports the national attention being placed on this important topic, which was also

addressed during the unveiling of the AAP-coordinated Healthy Child Care America Campaign in April. The Healthy Child Care America Campaign, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Bureau and Ma-

continued on page 5 . . .

Helping the Overly Aggressive Child Develop Pro-Social Behavior

Frank Miller, Associate Professor of Education, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas

Those of us who have worked with young children for any length of time have had occasion to deal with the overly aggressive child. In general, the overly aggressive child is one who exhibits behaviors that result in physical or emotional injury to another person, or that lead to property damage or destruction. In working with these children, it is important to remember that our primary concern must be the emotional well-being and physical safety of *all* the children under our care. A secondary concern, however, must be to do all that we can to help the overly aggressive child develop pro-social behaviors. Following are some guidelines for helping these children develop positive social relationships.

Be consistent and assertive from the very beginning in letting the children know that overly aggressive behaviors will not be tolerated. Communicate this message in a very

matter-of-fact way each time an instance of overly aggressive behavior occurs. Try not to overreact, and do not let yourself become emotionally involved or engage in a power struggle. Instead, be assertive and consistent in stating your expectations (e.g., "At our center we do not shove or hit. We use words to tell other people what we want or how we feel."). When we respond to overly aggressive behaviors in a mater-of-fact, yet assertive, manner, we serve as role models to the children of how to appropriately deal with difficult situations.

Whenever an instance of overly aggressive behavior occurs, it is important that we first direct our attention to the victim. Our immediate concern is to ensure that everyone is okay, and that no one has been hurt. Sometimes, the natural tendency is to give our immediate attention to the misbehaving child, thus inadvertently reinforcing the inappropriate behavior.

Enlist the overly aggressive child's participation in activities that require pro-social behaviors. Teachers can provide opportunities for the overly aggressive child to be "teacher's helper," or to help other children who may be in need of assistance. It also will be beneficial to structure activities throughout the day in which the children work together, either in pairs or small groups. By carefully observing the child's participation in these activities, we can provide appropriate guidance and intervention to help the child develop pro-social behaviors (e.g., sharing, taking turns and expressing frustration using words rather than physical aggression).

In many situations, it is possible to rechannel children's aggressive tendencies into more socially acceptable types of activities. Pounding nails in a play construction center, jumping, running and kicking or throwing a ball are all appropriate physical activities for young children. These activities become problematic, however, when they are done in a way that presents possible danger or intringes upon the rights of other children. It is important that caretakers provide children with ample opportunity to engage in appropriate and

In many situations, it is possible to rechannel children's aggressive tendencies into more socially acceptable types of activities.

The ABC's of Kindergarten Readiness

The ABC's of Kindergarten Readiness, a video for 4- to 6-year-olds, helps prepare children for the social and emotional transitions they can expect when entering kindergarten. Watch for more information on additional videos in the "School Rules!™" video series.

For more information, contact Educational Video and Books, LLC, P.O. Box 3250, Jackson, TN 38303; 800-944-5332; Fax: 800-260-7550; Web site: www.schoolrules.com. We appreciate the response to our ad in the Spring 1998 issue of Focus on Pre K & K *and would like to apologize for any inconvenience caused by phone or fax calls while our phones were inoperable. We are in our offices now and ready to do business!*

legitimate avenues for physical assertion and emotional release. This is particularly true in situations when the children are required to spend extended periods of time indoors, such as during the cold winter months.

Children are more likely to engage in nonaggressive behaviors when these socially appropriate behaviors are modeled and positively reinforced. A word of praise, a "pat on the back" or an encouraging note home to the guardians can go a long way toward helping the overly aggressive child develop prosocial behavioral patterns. Punishment, on the other hand, especially physical punishment of any kind, often sends a message to the child that using physical force is an acceptable and desirable way to influence the actions of others.

Whenever we, as care providers and teachers, are responsibile for the care and teaching of an overly aggressive child, it is important to remember that we have an opportunity to make a positive difference in that child's life. Our influence, the things that we do and say, can help children live happier, more productive lives. Remembering this can help carry us through the difficult and trying times when our patience might begin to wear thin. After all, what greater reward can we receive than knowing we have made a positive difference in the life of a young child!

Guidelines for Well-Behaved Children

Corporal punishment of children is unsupported by research, sometimes leads to injury, can alienate caregivers and children and contributes to the cycle of child abuse by teaching children it is all right to hit people who are smaller and weaker. In recognition of Spankout Day USA (April 30, 1998), the Center for Effective Discipline in Columbus, Ohio, disseminated the following guidelines and spanking alternatives:

1. Whenever possible, teach rather than punish. The goal of discipline is to teach children acceptable behavior. Hitting children does not teach acceptable behavior. It teaches children that "might makes right" and hitting is a way to solve problems.
2. View children's misbehavior as a mistake in judgment. It will be easier to think of ways to teach more acceptable behavior.
3. Whenever possible, make consequences relate to misbehavior. If a child hurts someone's feelings, the child should apologize. If the child makes a mess, he/she should clean it up.
4. Have behavior rules but make sure they are few in number, reasonable, and appropriate to the child's age and development.
5. Make sure that consequences for misbehavior are reasonable and clear.
6. Do not argue or nag children about rules. If a rule is broken, remind the child of the rule and the consequence for not following the rule. When you give a command, speak in a firm voice and repeat the command only twice.
7. If a child has many behaviors that concern you, do not try to change all of them at once. Choose one behavior of concern. Explain why the behavior is a problem, provide consequences for misbehavior and praise the behavior opposite of the misbehavior when the child demonstrates it.
8. Use good manners when talking to children about their behavior. Be sure to use "I'm sorry," "May I?" and "Excuse me" when they are appropriate. Be a good model for children in your speech and actions.
9. Catch children being good! Your praise will increase appropriate behavior. A hug, smile and soft words can also show approval.

For more information, visit the Center for Effective Discipline's Web site at www.stophitting.com.

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New Publication

a year in the life of a daycare center that works

According to author Harriet Brown, the child care horror stories are out there and they are numerous, but we can take heart: good child care centers do exist. And the Red Caboose Daycare Center is one of those. With warmth, wit and a spy's sharp eye, Brown has gone behind the scenes and produced a publication that documents her findings, *The Good-Bye Window: A Year in the Life of a Daycare Center That Works.*

One of the oldest independent child care centers in the country, Red Caboose was started over 25 years ago by a group of idealistic parents. Brown uncovers how the center has not only survived, but thrived, through some very tough times. Her day-to-day drama shows what a truly special place Red Caboose is: a model of what child care in this country *could* be.

The Good-Bye Window is available from The University of Wisconsin Press.

Resources

web sites for teachers & students

www.csnp.ohio-state.edu/glarrc.htm

This Web site from the Great Lakes Area Regional Resource Center provides a searchable online database of resources pertaining to the early prevention of violence. This site is motivated by research showing that the most cost-effective and successful intervention strategy is prevention. Those without Internet access can request a search of the database by calling Carol Daniels at 614-447-0844, ext. 110.

www.station.sony.com/wonderland/

Designed for the youngest Internet browsers, this section of the Sony Wonder's Wonderland site includes music, stories and simple activities specifically designed for 2- to 5-year-olds.

www.teachersatrandom.com

This resource from Random House Children's Publishing provides Kindergarten to 4th-grade teachers with materials to enhance the classroom experience for young readers. Features include teachers' and readers' guides, tips from other teachers, special offers and a Classroom Club, which offers free displays and chances to win prizes for your classroom.

www.wnet.org/wnetschool

wNetSchool, a Web site for K-12 teachers, features standards-based lesson plans and classroom activities, a multimedia primer, online mentors and links to model schools where the Internet is effectively used in the curriculum. In addition, special online workshops, conducted by master teachers and instructors from Columbia University's Teachers College, provide training templates for Web-based lessons and a National Teacher Training Institute (NTTI) section offers a data base of hundreds of hands-on, high-tech lessons using instructional technology.

www.negp.gov

The National Education Goals Panel Web site is designed for policymakers, parents, educators and business leaders. The site offers the latest information on the status of American education, the opportunity to create a report card of your state's progress and access to news and updates on educational improvement initiatives across the country.

. . . continued from page 1

ternal and Child Health Bureau, promotes partnerships among families, child care providers and health care professionals to promote the healthy development of children, including increasing access to preventative health services and providing safe physical environments. This includes eliminating the risk of ETS exposure to the 13 million children enrolled in child care nationally.

Studies have found that young children who are exposed to ETS are at an increased risk for ear infections and hearing problems, as well as upper respiratory infections and asthma. This includes children who are exposed to second-hand smoke in their child care setting or at school.

According to the AAP, any time a child breathes in smoke from a cigarette, pipe or cigar, they are exposed to 4,000 dangerous chemicals that can result in serious health problems later in life, including lung cancer, heart disease and cataracts. Studies show that ETS is linked to up to 2 million ear infections in children each year, and that it worsens asthmatic conditions for up to a million more. Exposure to the smoke of as few as 10 cigarettes a day may increase the likelihood that asthma will develop in a child who has never before shown symptons. ETS also can cause children to experience a stuffy nose, headaches, sore throat, eye irritation, hoarseness, dizziness, nausea, lack of appetite, lack of energy or fussiness.

Violence Prevention and Health Materials

The following materials are available from the Massachusetts Medical Society. For more information, call 800-322-2303.

Help Children See Through Violence in the Media
by Diane Levin, with Christine Gerzon and other members of TRUCE (Teachers for Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment)

Good Health Is in Your Hands: A Coloring Book That Teaches You How and When To Wash Your Hands

Violence Prevention for Children and Youth, Parent Education Cards
from The Massachusetts Medical Society Committee on Violence:

Raise Your Child with Praise
Time Out!
When Children Witness Violence in the Home
Bullying
Some Myths and Facts About Violence

Tip cards are available in quantities (packets) of 50. One packet of each tip card is available free of charge per individual or practice. Additional cards are available for $5 per packet.

from the national SAFE KIDS campaign

For many children, the arrival of summer means bright sunny weather and outdoor adventures. Unfortunately, the summer months are also marked by an increase in injuries and deaths, many of which could have been prevented by following simple safety precautions. During "trauma season" (May-September), more unintentional childhood deaths and injuries occur than at any other time throughout the year.

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign has compiled the following summer safety tips to help caregivers make sure children avoid the "summertime blues."

Walking Safety for Young Pedestrians

Children often first learn about vehicles when they receive them as toys or as they are portrayed in cartoons. It should be emphasized to children that vehicles are not toys, nor are they friendly characters, as they are often shown on televison.

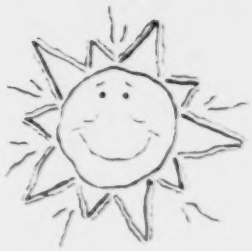
(Ages 4 and Under)

Safety rules for preschoolers should stress staying away from roadways unless they are with a responsible adult. Caregivers should demonstrate safe pedestrian behavior to set a good example for children. Children ages 4 and under should be supervised by an adult when playing outdoors. In addition, preschoolers should be told to:

- Stay away from streets and driveways
- Play in areas where there is no traffic
- Identify driveways and streets, and their surrounding areas
- Recognize the people who can help them cross the street safely—a responsible adult—and cross only with those people
- Identify emergency vehicles such as police cars, ambulances and fire trucks.

(Ages 5-9)

Children in this age group are most at risk for pedestrian injuries because they believe they are ready to be independent before they actually are. Because they do not have the developmental ability to make decisions about traffic patterns, children under age 10 should never cross streets alone.



In addition to the rules for younger children, 5- to 9-year-olds should be taught to:

- Stop before entering roadways
- Never enter the street from between parked cars or from behind bushes
- Stop before crossing a driveway
- Look in all directions before crossing the street
- Obey and recognize all traffic signals and markings
- Wear clothing with retro-reflective materials, especially at dawn and dusk
- Walk, do not run, across the street, never cross diagonally
- Always cross the street with an adult.

Play It Safe on Playgrounds

During the warm weather months, children head for the playground to climb the jungle gym, jump rope and sway on swings. With this ritual, however, comes an increased risk of injury for children. Each year more than 211,000 children ages 14 and under are treated in hospital emergency rooms for playground equipment-related injuries.

To ensure safety, all playground equipment should be properly maintained. The following steps should be taken to help maintain a safe playground:

- Install slip-resistant surfaces on climbing and gripping parts of all playground equipment
- Install guardrails, or other protective barriers, aound elevated platforms
- Paint or galvanize metal equipment to prevent rusting, which can result in weakened structures and sharp, broken edges
- Remove potentially hazardous parts, such as protruding bolts or sharp corners
- To prevent head entrapment, there should be no openings between 3 1/2 inches and 9 inches on any playground equipment.

learning together: preservice, novice, experienced and seasoned teachers

Dear Professional Colleagues,

During the past 18 months, I have been working with both preservice and inservice teachers via two-way audio and video class sessions, known as the Virtual Indiana Classroom (VIC). This forum has allowed me to have ongoing dialogue with teachers throughout the state of Indiana. This vantage point also has afforded me the opportunity to listen to and talk with teachers about their experiences working with preservice, novice, experienced and seasoned teachers.

Technology enables lively conversations and spirited debates among individuals who ordinarily would not have met one another. In this interactive arena, preservice and novice teachers discuss and examine the characteristics of qualified, competent and caring teachers. The major bone of contention among this group has been if experienced and seasoned teachers are out of step with new and creative teaching methods. Often, preservice and novice teachers voice a willingness to try new ideas while they assume that practicing teachers have little or no interest in growing and stretching professionally.

At the same time, experienced teachers wonder why preservice and novice teachers have such negative views of longevity. Seasoned teachers will admit that while *some* of their colleagues have no desire to try new ideas or explore varied pathways, many experienced teachers blaze the trail in order to prepare the way for new colleagues.

As I accept my newly minted "card" as a member of the seasoned professional club, I have the opportunity to simultaneously ponder alone, as well as link with preservice, novice, experienced and seasoned teachers throughout the state, about changing perspectives, opening the dialogue doors, and developing and sustaining connections. These interactions have nudged me to ask: What do we expect of teachers, no matter their length of experience? At the same time, I wonder whether we are fair to one another in terms of avoiding stereotypes and seeing strengths. Can we change our perspective with regard to how we view teachers outside of our peer group affiliation? Can preservice and novice teachers begin to see that teachers outside of their group make significant contributions to the education of children? Can experienced teachers understand that preservice and novice teachers are trying to find ways to become active contributors? Can both groups drop the stereotypes when they describe one another and instead describe one another as teachers, advanced students, fellow travelers and lifelong learners? Of course we can. But is it easy to do? Absolutely NOT!!

In order to change our perspectives, we must open the dialogue door. This can happen if we see each other as individuals first and professionals second. Can we get to know each other without putting everyone under the microscope and critiquing each other when we work together? Can we ask, "What must we do in order to create an environment where everyone can be nurtured, accepted, respected and honored?" Opening the door to dialogue means taking a risk to reduce, and then eliminate, the barriers that prevent us from talking with and learning from one another! Opportunities for learning in new ways create new possibilities for ongoing dialogue among all teachers.

When we open the door to dialogue, we set the stage for developing and sustaining established and new connections. These connections allow teachers at different stages in their careers to form links that allow us to reach new destinations in terms of professional growth. Having a circle that is inclusive, rather than exclusive, promotes an awareness that it "takes the whole teaching profession from preservice to seasoned teachers" to make a difference for one another. This message is reinforced for me each week as I work with teachers via the Virtual Indiana Classroom, a room without walls and boundaries.

Ready for the connection,

Jacqueline Blackwell,
Vice President, Infancy/Early Childhood
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Call for Manuscripts

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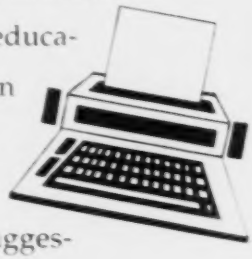

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